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A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

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Special Number on INDUSTRY

NOVEMBER 1951
Vol. II No. 11

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CONTENTS

MONTHLY LETTER– – – – – – – 419
The Industrial Plant as Community

INTERIM – – – – – – – – – 428
New Frontier Organization in the U.S.A.—The Layman in the Church—Frontier Council in Conference

MAN IN INDUSTRY– – – – – – – 430
By "Abacus"

HUMAN RELATIONS IN INDUSTRY – – – 439
The Classical and Biblical Attitudes to Work
By W. G. Symons

THE HUMAN FACTOR IN LARGE SCALE INDUSTRY – – – – – – – 447
By T. M. Heron

SCAPEGOATS AND IDEALS – – – – – 452
By P. M.

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THE
FRONTIER
A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

Vol. II. No. 11. NOVEMBER 1951

Monthly Letter

THE General Election, still being fought when this letter goes to press, has been held in the shadow of economic anxieties even more searching than those felt in 1950. Apprehensions of the problems that must be encountered within the next year have lowered the temperature of an argument already somewhat reduced by the caution of politicians who, on both sides, suffer from a lack of leading ideas with which to confront the public and the situation. The whole world of political and industrial forces in which our political aspirations have been pursued is in transition; the terms in which they still have to be discussed are manifestly out-of-date. Underlying the political conflict is still, for instance, the antagonism of industrial management and labour. Between their interests, as they see them, the gulf seems as wide as ever. But is it anything like as deep? Has not common experience been lately filling it up? Six years of socialistic experiment have done much to train management in the real needs of the industrial worker; while the governmental responsibilities that trade union leaders have had to bear have turned their thoughts away from the utopian and critical ideas upon which they rose to power, and towards the concrete problems of upholding a national economy in a competitive world. Even common experience is not enough, however, to inspire united action until there is a common interpretation of experience. Nor

will action be effectual unless this interpretation is the right one. Informal meetings between industrialists of widely different grades, which we have been privileged to attend, have made us more conscious of this need. Our culture indeed produces a special kind of mind to help in this work of interpretation—what may be called the philosopher-commentator. An outstanding thinker of this kind is Mr. Peter Drucker, whose analysis of the industrial world-revolution was noted here at the time of the last election: and what follows in this letter is written just after reading his latest book.[1]

The current interpretations still run in the ruts of the past. That is a great reason for something now constantly coming up in industrial discussions—"the failure of communication"—of which we shall have more to say presently. But the hang-over from the past impedes us from stating present questions, even to ourselves, in a way that can lead to action. What is to be thought and done, for instance, about the "depersonalizing" effects of industrial work which so often worry sensitive and intelligent people? They see that increasing division and specialization of labour is reducing the individual's contribution to a mere fraction of a process. The divorce of the worker from his product and the productive process is a contraction of his personality, and there are many other developments of modern society which tend to eliminate the personal element where it was previously important. This apprehension is almost certain to appear wherever industrialists and others are exchanging ideas, especially between people with Christian and humanist aspirations, for here is a common frontier problem, whether we take man to be a child of God or an autonomous personality in need of self-expression.[2] It is mostly those who

[1] *The New Society.* The Anatomy of Industrial Order, by Peter F. Drucker. Heinemann. 15s.

[2] A point of opposition between these two standpoints is discussed upon a later page, in the article by Mr. W. G. Symons.

enjoy, and need for their own work, the largest liberties who are the first to raise the question whether industry ought not to reduce, or try to abolish, the specialization of industrial work into jobs of a repetitive and monotonous kind. But how do we set about this? For the main current of technical progress, which no one seriously proposes to reverse, sets wholly towards more and more of this subdivision of labour. When it is agreed, as in Britain to-day, that production must imperatively be increased, it is also recognized that this means extending mass-production methods and superseding a number of existing skills by breaking them down into more specialized skills and standardized operations. We cannot do and undo at one and the same time. Detailed adjustments to vary certain jobs, or to move individuals from one to another, may in certain cases be desirable and possible, but the subservience of the individual to the requirements of the system is inescapable. Moreover, the workers' own point of view has to be taken into account, and this is often quite different from the way their work is viewed by the people most concerned for its improvement.

An Operatives' View

For example, in one very large undertaking, where a staff of many hundreds was engaged in clerical work "broken down" into repetitive operations, the management felt so concerned at the number of girls who were performing completely monotonous tasks that they engaged a team of experts in industrial psychology to conduct an investigation and devise a more humane pattern of divided labour. These investigators were soon nonplussed at finding that not one of the workers who was interrogated expressed any discontent with what she was doing, and that most would be very cross with the management if it were altered. One of the girls, when asked if she did not find the monotony unbearable—her task was limited to punching holes in identical cards week after week—replied that the pile of finished

cards at each day's end gave her visible proof of " something accomplished, something done ", a satisfaction she could not expect from the more varied work suggested as an alternative. Within a week the enquiry had to be called off. Other investigators too have found that a repetitive task, requiring but trifling muscular exertion and mechanical enough for the workers to converse while performing it, is accepted by many as the kind of job they really like. It seems rather perverse to object to people being happy in what is presumably activity useful to others ; and the question whether they ought to like what they do cannot be answered without going into much deeper questions about the direction in which industry is developing. We have to recognize that people make different demands on work and bring different abilities to it. There is something inherently ineffectual about this whole approach to the humanization of industry. Is it that we have not yet clearly distinguished what industry is, in itself, from its often ruinous effects upon the previous structure of society ? Must the problem be approached from another side, both in principle and in practice ? It is upon such questions that we find Drucker's interpretation illuminating.

The Plant as Community

He suggests that the large scale modern industrial firm is an incipient form of community—a social institution which, by the sheer power of its indispensable economic performance, is spreading all over the world and transforming the social relationship of humanity. The first really representative examples appeared early in this century, notably the Ford motor works, and were markedly different in conception from the previous constructions of industrialism. But the same principles and practices are spreading into the smaller manufacturing enterprizes with rapidly transforming effects. Even more than the works of the previous century, the advance of this new pattern of productive enterprise over-rides, alters or destroys the traditional social structures,

including the already-weakened family, most of all where ancient or primitive economies, in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, have had industrial enterprises run on the latest principles planted in their midst. The bitterest criticism of industrialization comes from those who know the values it has painfully liquidated. But to project these dismays upon the modern enterprise itself does not help us to understand its own nature and can blind us to the way in which it might become socially constructive. For this is also a new pattern of social order and discipline. Already its own growth, and the social decay it spreads around it, have made unemployment unendurable; without access to his workplace, man has become almost an outcaste. The "plant community" has already become the dominant force in shaping societies all over the world for an indefinite age to come. But this means that it will have to become increasingly responsible for promoting the other, non-economic human needs of which at first it took no account. More and more, it is trying to assume this responsibility.

The Plant as Politics

The new industrial enterprise is the pattern of human relations and techniques designed to a specific economic purpose, and its "rationale, behaviour, policies and decisions" are not subject to change by any of the legal or political factors adduced in most current arguments about it. It remains essentially unaltered, under whatever system of ownership or capitalization; and under changes of political government its demands and problems are still the same. No less inherent, too, are the human tensions that have existed in machine industry from the first, which emerge politically as the conflict between management and labour, but in reality are more complex. There are also conflicting currents within management, between top executives and undermanagers, tensions within labour between workman and foreman, union member and official. All simple expedients for abolishing these differences prove futile, such as that of

vesting the ownership of a plant in " the workers ", because they cannot alter the inherently hierarchic structure imposed by the character of industrial processes. When the workers of one of the most successful worker-owned factories in America were trying to organize a union against their own company, an old employee said, " Sure this is my plant: but someone has got to protect my interests as a downtrodden working stiff against my privileges as a bloated capitalist stock-holder." Nationalized industries illustrate the same dilemma—nor is that any argument against nationalization.

Management as Government

Why cannot these tensions be eliminated? Drucker's answer to this is one of his best insights. He observes that " the enterprise is necessarily a governmental institution exercising vital authority over men ". It is a community, and management is its government; but this cannot be what we call legitimate government, since management cannot rule in the sole interest of its members. They are not, *qûa* plant workers, the citizens for whose benefit the institution exists. Like the managers themselves, they are only an important group of claimants; and management has to satisfy other claims, e.g. for capital, welfare and payments to the State. The managers' bounden duty is to keep the enterprise in existence, which means maintaining not only its productivity but its profitability.[1] Of course one may say that this is ultimately in the workers' interest too. But the immediate fact is that the worker's interest, as a member of the enterprise and subject to its management, is not identical with society's interest in its maintenance and future. And the worker's claim is, at bottom, based on his own responsibility for sustaining, in his person and in his family, the quality and continuity of human life itself—an even more fundamental though not more urgent claim than that of

[1] See the Supplement to *The Christian News-Letter* also referred to on page 437 of this number.

management for the economic institution. Both claims are valid. Their adjustment is a genuinely political issue, a question of rights and powers, and the workers' unions are in this aspect also organs of management.

The Necessary Conflict

Obviously, if this functional tension breeds resentment to the point of physical revolt—or even of passive resistance beyond a point—it can disrupt the plant community and then imperil society at large. But in practice, since the economic institutions are of vital importance, state and management combine to save them in the last resort. The autonomous workers' unions can be made wholly subservient to management, as they are under fascism and communism. Important as they are, the autonomy of the unions is not indispensable to the functioning of the plant, as that of management is. Their demotion to a position of toleration and indoctrination under espionage is ultimately ruinous in every way, but not immediately disastrous to production itself—it may be a convenience. But every rightly informed person in his senses dreads such a thing. The tension in question is one we have to live with and domesticate, for its suppression brings into play forces that erode and corrupt the voluntary element, not only in the plant community but in every other function of society. Ultimately it must cripple the only kind of social living which can maintain and develop technological culture itself. We have not, then, to put an end to the argument within industry ; we have rather to find out how to perpetuate it. The necessity for it is renewed by every change in the system of industry as it evolves in adaptation to the changing world. This is an altercation we have to make constitutional, and learn how to conduct according to principles and in the spirit of charity.

It would be hard to conceive a tougher task. If we have so far followed Drucker's line of thought closely, it is not in uncritical endorsement of the whole of his book which contains much that may be challengeable. It is because he

indicates a hopeful approach to this task, in his conception of the enterprise as socially-constitutive. What we have too much reason to fear as the mere mechanization of man, he shows developing into a special principle of human organization, and further yet into the orchestration, as it were, of intellectual, manual and also social faculties, in a community which has come into physical existence before it has acquired social consciousness.

Industry and Locality

No society can be constituted by economic associations alone. This great revolution in human work could lead only to disaster if it proceeded in disregard of the social and cultural needs and values that lie outside its own orbit of action. But with the recognition of its internal order as communal there goes another, external development. The enterprise begins to be more conscious of its position among the other non-economic institutions, and of its responsibility for the locality in which it works. The need of effort in this direction was a leading theme of Mr. George Goyder's recent book *The Future of Private Enterprise* [1] and it is probable that resuscitation of our weakened local government can only come about through the awakening self-consciousness of the local plant communities. In America, management has in some cases become well aware of the need for better "community relations"; though it is through their trade unions that social contact actually exists and must first be promoted. This is as yet a thing of tender and precarious growth—where it is indeed anything more than an idea. In the States the unions' influence in local life is exercised in a narrow and self-interested spirit; though there are a few shining exceptions which we can only hope could be matched in this country. For without such interaction with the surrounding society, the industrial community cannot be infused with the social sense it needs to achieve its own internal order; and if it could, the result

[1] Reviewed in *The Frontier* of June, 1951.

might be all the worse. A nation of self-integrated plant communities could limit and disrupt all other forms of the national life even faster than the previous industrial revolution has done, if it marched on oblivious of their claims.

A Witness from the Past

There have been two great phases in the imposition of mechanization upon human labour, and in the attempts to regulate it. In the former phase it was the sheer, ruthless expenditure of human health and life in industry that stirred the consciences and inspired a few zealots to expose these enormities and rouse public opinion against them. Success came slowly, through many decades. In 1815 Sir Robert Peel was congratulating the House of Commons because fatal accidents in the factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire had been reduced to 1 per cent of all employees per annum—very nearly a hundred times the ratio of workers killed in British industries to-day. The improvement in general health, through improved conditions, if it could be similarly presented, would doubtless be even more impressive. There is no more lead poisoning at all in the potteries, and many other occupational diseases are either abolished or well under control and on the way out. In those days there was a clearly-defined humanitarian issue within the factories, yards and workshops. The destructive effects of industry in the outer world were masked, in this country, by rising prosperity; and of the effects upon distant countries, the benefits alone were recognized. The second phase, in which we live, presents human problems far more complex, that extend to the ends of the earth, but one of them has become central—this conflict between management and labour. Its resolution is a prior condition for a hopeful approach to all the rest, which otherwise take on the aspect of a Frankenstein nightmare and threaten to paralyse the will. On the other hand, we have this new realization, that what we confront in the industrial enterprise is no longer the crude impact of machinery upon man; but an emerging pattern

of co-operation, a frame-work of social order. What it will become and how it will constrain us, depend, under God, upon what we make of this, through our thought and action as free persons.

In the former phase, the dominant problem was solved, through the co-operation of humanists and Christians within industry, with great and enduring success. If people with the same motives are to-day being drawn into the questions of de-centralization, regional relations and communication, that record should help them to have faith in their labours and hope for the future.

INTERIM

New Frontier Organization in U.S.A.

Over 200 Protestant church leaders met on September 14 and 15 at Howard University, for a special conference, at which they founded a new interdenominational organization, *Christian Action*, which will endeavour to focus Christian thought and action on social, political and economic issues from the viewpoint of the Christian gospel. The conference endorsed a statement of purpose which includes the following paragraph :—

" We affirm that the Gospel impels us to work together for a responsible society—local, national, and world-wide—which will give each person or group a fair and equal opportunity to develop his full potentialities. This involves judgment on the political, economic, and social policies of our country ; it also involves responsibility to seek constructive policy, consensus, and common action. We declare that church members have a responsibility as Christians to work in the power structures and centres of influence in society. As a group we intend to speak and act on concrete issues as they arise."

The statement goes on to affirm, among evils the movement intends to confront, the racial tensions, growing insecurity, disillusionment and fear which have placed millions in jeopardy of totalitarian enslavement. It also rejects the identification of any economic or political systems with the will of God, and condemns " the irresponsible exploitation of anti-communism to undercut freedom through intimidation ". In these last two points, the manifesto provides a welcome counter-blast to a document put out some time ago by a big conference of American business-men ; which was perhaps the most barefaced

attempt on record to exploit "Christian" support for existing economic and political interests. To make such spiritual piracy more difficult may well have been one of the reasons for the present effort.

On the Executive Council there will be such well-known American Christian leaders as John Bennett, F. Ernest Johnson, and Reinhold Niebuhr.

* * * *

The Layman in the Church

The speaker at the next Frontier Luncheon on Thursday, December 13th, will be Mr. W. G. Symons, who is the writer of an article in this number on the Greek and Hebrew conceptions of work. His subject will be "The Layman in the Church". While the chief concern of *The Frontier* is with the responsibilities of laymen in the civil life of society, there is a good deal of talk going on at present about their responsibilities in the life of the Church, and this needs to be examined from a frontier standpoint. The chairman will be Mr. H. G. Judd, Mayor of Hampstead.

The attendance at the Luncheon on October 18th was disappointingly small, and it may be that the move to Queen Mary Hall in order to reduce the price of tickets was a mistake, in spite of what appeared to be a popular desire. It looks as though readers of *The Frontier* regard a reduction in the price of anything under present conditions as so extraordinary that they suspect there must be a catch in such a move!

* * * *

Frontier Council in Conference

The Christian Frontier Council held its annual conference at Broadstairs at the end of September. The general subject was "Man in Industry". About thirty guests, representing many sides of industrial experience, accepted an invitation to be present. The conference was presided over by Mr. Henry Brooke, M.P. The present number of *The Frontier* is in part an outcome of the discussions that took place, which increased both in depth and vigour as the sessions proceeded. This was an encouraging proof of the potential value, in these days when so much is heard of "joint consultation in industry", of unofficial consultations *outside* industry, between those who are involved in its affairs at any and every level. At the final meeting of this conference a general desire was expressed that the Council should take some further initiative in bringing about consultative meetings of this character, and steps to that end are under consideration.

MAN IN INDUSTRY

By ABACUS

WHEN we focus attention on the subject of man in industry, I suppose it is natural for us immediately to think in terms of contrast—the contrast between the gigantic and ever-increasing scale of modern industry on the one hand and on the other the apparent insignificance (almost) of the individual men and women in it. A contrast almost as great as that between the needle and the haystack. A world in which personalities get lost and a person becomes a number: Employee No. 9637.

Those of us who are either professing and perhaps practising Christians in our various walks of life, or, if we do not specifically profess such a faith, are at least born and bred in the Christian tradition, have a particular concern for the priceless fact of individuality and the value of the individual. Consequently it is natural and right that we should be anxiously on the watch to prevent any diminution, and encourage any growth, in the significance of man as individual within the industrial fold.

I confess that having got so far in attempting to state the object of this discussion, I feel considerable hesitation in starting it. There are many people who are better qualified. I am neither theologian nor philosopher, and therefore cannot speak with any authority about the nature of man and individuality. And though I have been employed in industry (of one kind and another) for most of my working life, my concern has not primarily been with personnel management or labour relations, such as would give me authority to write on a subject like the one we have chosen. I have come up primarily on the financial side—and as such, might be presumed to be disqualified from the start—representing as I do an influence widely regarded as sinister (though not of the left!), and blamed perhaps more

than any other single influence both for the helplessness of man as an individual in the midst of economic chaos, and for the creation of modern industry on its present scale.

But finance and accountancy are of themselves neither good nor bad, but neutral. Their effects spring from the use people make of them. They can help to fortify the values attaching to the individual, just as much as to destroy them. So that my financial background does not necessarily rule me out. Moreover, it may help ; since, in accounting for any organization, you must study its structure, and get to know how every separate part of the body industrial breathes and works, what makes the wheels go round, and what makes things tick.

Now to get down to our subject—I suppose that in *The Frontier* we can take as granted that the individual person is important, and also the reason why he is. If he were not significant in himself, life would be much easier for the planners, as we have seen in Germany and Russia. If you believe that the individual only exists to be made a tool of in the interests of the State, you can plan utterly ruthlessly ; and you will achieve some material success—for a while. But we believe that it is utterly wrong to regard individual men and women in this light, because each person is a potential child of God. He does not exist to be made a tool of ; he has a life to live, and to live fully. And if he is to live out his own life, we must retain and develop his capacity for choice and decision.

I have put this all far too simply, I know. But I have found in business that it is often necessary to reduce a problem, however complex, to very simple terms, if one wants to take action about it. If one were to consider every aspect of a complicated situation, one would go on considering and considering and action would never follow. And I take it that we are not considering this proposition in the abstract, merely as an intellectual exercise, but we do want some action to follow the holding of these beliefs. At any rate, I know that it helps me very much, in managing

those I am responsible for, to remember quite simply that they are all potential children of God, with lives to work out and live; and therefore that I must do nothing, if I can help it, in managing them, which might tend to weaken or eliminate anyone's capacity for choice and decision. Putting it more positively, I have got to encourage them to exercise and develop that capacity.

This brings one to the question of scale in modern industry. I want to try and get clear what we mean when we talk of large scale, over against this conception of man the potential child of God.

First of all, what it 's not. Large scale is not necessarily the same thing as nationalization—let 's be quite clear about that. Nationalization often involves large scale organization, but large scale organization, and the problem of the individual in it, existed and still exists in private enterprise. In certain ways, nationalization makes the problem more difficult, but all I want to do at this stage is to make the point that when we discuss the problems of the individual in modern large-scale industry we are not thinking only, or even mainly, of nationalization, but of something which exists in both the private and the public sectors of industry.

Neither is the problem of scale merely the problem of very large numbers. This may sound paradoxical, but I have seen relatively small organizations of two to three thousand people, in which the significance of the individuals in them was often just as much in doubt. So, too, I have known organizations of the same sort of size or larger in which almost every person in them felt conscious of his own part and its purpose. Perhaps it is stupid to suggest that an organization is quite small when it has two or three thousand people in it. What I am really trying to say is that we do not have to wait until tens or hundreds of thousands of people are employed in a single business, before the problem of the human being in modern industry arises. It doesn't arise, in the terms in which we are considering it, in a business employing half a dozen people. It does arise, however,

when two or three thousand are employed. The transition point is somewhere in between. A manager I know well, who is greatly sensitive to these matters and who has had considerable experience, said that in his judgment—and it can be no more than judgment—the dividing line is somewhere round the five hundred mark; and he based his judgment on the view that human relations showed a tendency to be better below that figure and worse above it.

There was a time, quite recently, when many people hoped that nationalization was going to be the cure. The old private employer would disappear; there would be no one to exploit and appropriate to himself the benefit of the employees' hard work; and all would be well. But the employee has found that although nobody is getting the profit from his labour, in certain other respects there is little change, and what there is is not for the better. He is still being managed and "pushed around" just as much as he was before, if not more so; and moreover, for reasons which he often is not told and does not understand. In the old days, he at least felt he understood the employer's motives.

Now, I am going to suggest that our concern with the apparent insignificance of man in modern industry is really about the extent to which he is prevented from entering into decisions that vitally affect him. When we think of scale in this connection, we are really thinking, not of sheer numbers in the organization, but of the gulf between those who make decisions and those who are affected by them. The heart of the matter is, I suggest, to be found in the way we organize industry generally—which we tend to do in such a way as to stifle the very thing we as Christians should be most concerned to further—namely the capacity of the individual man and woman for choice and decision.

I cannot help feeling, from my own experience, that it is this removal from people of the opportunity to choose and decide for themselves things that are important to them, that tends more than anything else to create this problem of insignificance and helplessness of the individual human

being in modern industry. Of course there are many other influences at work. But I am deliberately selecting this one out of a number of different contributory causes; and suggesting to you that by concentrating on this particular cause we shall achieve the most practical results.

Before I go on to consider possible steps, I want to say that I altogether reject the view that it doesn't matter whether work is interesting or satisfying or not, that it doesn't matter whether decisions are made *for* a man or whether he has a chance to make them or participate in them himself. The question of why people work is another matter. But if anybody feels inclined to argue that a man's work-sphere is a sphere in which he need not be given the opportunity to choose and decide for himself, I part company at the start. A man's working life occupies half, or nearly half, his waking hours. And in so large a part of his experience, he must be given full opportunity to develop and express his personality. It is not sufficient to leave him only his spare time in which to exercise his powers of choice and decision. I have met people whose working life was so dominated by routines which left no scope for any initiative whatever that personality and individuality were in some cases utterly crushed; and I could not help feeling that, although they still had breath in their bodies, the sixth commandment had been violated and spiritual murder done. So it seems to me most important that people should be able to exercise their capacity for choice and decision in their work. And it is the reconciliation of this objective with the necessity for retaining both discipline in an organization and also the effectiveness and authority of management, that is perhaps the most difficult problem in industry to-day.

I know full well, of course, that everyone cannot decide everything for themselves—that is not what I am suggesting. Such a thing is probably undesirable, and quite impracticable. To begin with, there are technical considerations which govern the point at which decisions are made. The individual workman in a shipyard cannot decide what sort of

ship is to be built, nor even what colour. The size of things we make and handle, and the remoteness of the markets we are making them for, inevitably means that many things have to be decided by higher authority or at a central point.

In addition to technical considerations, there is the tendency towards larger and larger units. For many reasons this tendency is inevitable in a technological society : and it is almost impossible to put into reverse. Moreover, it is characteristic not only of industry as such, but also of the trade unions too. As unions get bigger, more decisions of vital moment to the individual are getting further and further removed from the men and women they primarily affect. That is why the institution of Joint Industrial Councils on which employers or managers meet officials of the unions concerned do not really touch the problem we are considering. I am not saying that a Joint Council is not an excellent institution. It is salutary for management, to put it at its lowest, to have to discuss matters and explain decisions to people whose sole duty it is to consider the interests of those employed in the industry. But the Council is far removed from the individual employee.

Although it is true that the individual is in many cases unable to take part in the making of certain types of decisions, there are many other cases in which he could do so. The process of decision-making in large groups is something that we do not know sufficient about ; it is a subject worthy of much greater study than I can give it here. If it is possible to evolve a technique of reaching collective decisions, which enables the individual to feel that he has contributed an effective part and the management to operate no less effectively than at present, we have gone a part of the way towards our goal. It would be interesting to know whether much progress has been made in recent times along these lines.

Another aspect of the same question which I suggest also requires study, is the process of advising employees of decisions that have been made and why—in such a way that they feel they are not being used as pawns in a game of

industrial chess. In the main, there are two different situations to be catered for. On the one hand, there are those cases in which some external cause, quite outside the business, has created a situation in which immediate decisions were needed. The decisions involved in a case of this type are probably ones in which the individuals lower down the scale can never take part, because there just isn't any time for consultation. It is all the more important in such cases to see that the employees have the circumstances and the nature of the decision fully explained to them. On the other hand, there are those cases which are fully internal to the business, in which the process of consultation and group discussion can take place; and when the decision has been made it is then merely a matter of reporting back on something to which all employees concerned may have already contributed a part.

How to bring the individual into the process of decision-making, when the decisions have to be made at a higher level, is one aspect of the matter. The other is how to give each individual the greatest possible opportunity to make his own choices and decisions. And I want now to suggest a few positive steps that might be taken towards this end.

First, I suggest a conscious effort has to be made by all concerned never to take decisions at top level which can be taken at lower levels. As we have already seen, there are some decisions which have to be taken at the top or centre, though perhaps nothing like as many as is commonly supposed; but whenever possible we should try, I think, to force decisions away from the top, and away from the centre. If this process is repeated at all levels of the organization, it is astonishing how much decision-making takes place at low levels.

If we want to preserve or recapture the significance of the individual and the small group in modern industry—and not only industry, but other walks of life too—here is an important principle which ought to be adhered to whenever we plan work or organize people. Never centralize anything that can operate or function in decentralized form; and never take any decision at a higher level than is necessary.

I believe accountancy can make a useful contribution at this point. The profit motive may or may not have led to social irresponsibility; but by providing everyone with an accepted yardstick for taking decisions, it did foster a very great degree of decentralization of decision-making.[1] But in fields where the profit motive no longer operates as the ultimate sanction, such as in the nationalized industries and also in the departments of large scale businesses, accountancy can apply the principles and techniques of profit assessment to enable choice and decision to be responsibly exercised on as wide and decentralized a basis as seems desirable. We can, with modern methods of budgetary control and standard costing, divide a business (whether nationalized or not) into any number of sections, each of which can be left free to make certain decisions within the limits of the budget or profit and loss account.

Secondly, I suggest that another important rule of thumb is that, if a centralized form of organization proves necessary for technical or other reasons, only a person who thoroughly dislikes the idea of centralization should be appointed to run it. In short, never let a centralizer operate centralization; if he does, he will almost inevitably eliminate all freedom of choice and decision at other points and levels.

Finally, one of the administrator's habits, which is most deadening and damaging to individual development, is the desire to achieve consistency of treatment as between one person and another. From the administrative point of view this is neat and tidy, and has other obvious advantages; and moreover, it has the plausible justification that it ensures fairness all round. But if we are anxious to encourage the individual men and women in industry to lead their own lives, develop their own personalities and experience the

[1] See "The Profit Motive in Industry," a Supplement to the *Christian News-Letter*, No. 152. Copies of this Supplement may still be obtained from The Christian Frontier Council, 8 The Cloisters, Windsor Castle, price 6d.

feeling of being of some significance it is important, I suggest, not to insist on consistency of treatment but to tolerate a good deal of inconsistency. The logical corollary of this is that persons whose experience and personal bias makes them want to ensure uniformity should not be appointed to positions of executive responsibility in large organizations.

One very important part of this problem that I have not yet found an adequate solution to, is the question of deciding how work is or should be done. Take accountancy. The designing of accounting processes and methods is a very skilled and technical job. In a staff of 500 or so, there will probably be only one or two people, perhaps half a dozen in all at the top, who have the necessary experience to determine how things shall be done. Apart from that, there has got to be system. In the higher ranks we can achieve a good deal by deliberately refraining from working out all the routines and methods in detail, but merely outlining what is required and why, and encouraging people to work it out for themselves. Even then, as often as not, they get stuck and have to be helped out. That doesn't matter; they are creating something and deciding something themselves, and welcome a helping hand. But this only touches the top two to three dozen people and doesn't really tackle the problem of the rank and file. Suggestion schemes play their part, of course, but there is no real substitute for the touch of the master-designer at the top. Perhaps once again, this is a question of educating those in authority all down the line to make people below them take the decisions whenever possible.

That really brings me to the end of what I have to say. All I have been able to do is to tell you, in effect, the sort of response I feel I am called upon to try and make in face of the challenge my Christian beliefs present me with. I am conscious that I have approached the problem entirely from the managerial side. But perhaps that is as it should be. If we are going to do anything about the Christian concern for man in modern industry, we have got to get a closer identity of interest between management and managed. I do not think

you can get that interest by the simple device of profit sharing, though that obviously helps. In my submission, it is very doubtful whether we shall achieve much until we have brought working people, by means not yet fully known or understood, into the process of making and transmitting decisions, so that they lose the feeling of being at the mercy of other people's whims and gain a feeling of significance in the industrial process. And that means management giving something up—giving up the right and the habit of acting and deciding arbitrarily—but in such a way as not to impair discipline or reduce the effectiveness of management. Management must still manage.

That is my excuse, if excuse is needed, for approaching the problem entirely from the managerial side. Others will no doubt redress any lack of balance in my approach.

HUMAN RELATIONS IN INDUSTRY

The Classical and Biblical Attitudes to Work

THERE is no need to argue the importance of Sir George Schuster's book *Christianity and Human Relations in Industry*.[1] Human life for most people in this land and for many people in all lands is lived in an industrial setting. The author brings to the subject a long experience of industry in its widest sense—of factory production, mining, commerce and finance in many countries. The book is based on the Beckly Lecture delivered to the annual Methodist Conference this year. In the first part, in Chapter one and part of Chapter two the author attempts to construct a basis of Christian principles applicable to this subject. From thence to the end of Chapter six he is concerned with the practical responsibilities of managers and

[1] *Christianity and Human Relations in Industry*. By Sir George Schuster. (Epworth Press. 6s. od.)

workers. The three concluding chapters examine the subject in its wider social and political setting.

The middle part of the book is by far the best. Sir George Schuster draws on his wide practical experience. He indicates, clearly and well, the necessary conditions for good relations between managers and workers in industry, and the objectives which a manager should set himself. He says some wise and important things about industrial health, safety, and welfare, and a great deal about joint consultation and the problems of " communication " between different industrial groups. Most of this section is quite straightforward, it will be accepted with little dissent by anyone who knows the facts. A few points may give rise to debate —notably perhaps the references to education and to agriculture.

Sir George Schuster questions how far our normal education, with its literary basis, can be adequate to the needs of the great majority of our people who are engaged in manual work. " Are we not," he asks, " still carrying forward the idea that the educated individual must get out of manual work and that it constitutes ' social advance ' to do so ? If so, is not education going to be an influence tending to create internal conflict, unhappiness, and a wrong attitude to work among the great numbers who will unavoidably have to spend their lives in manual tasks ? " That question indicates a problem which is very important for the future of our society. The extension of our educational system, together with the increasing ease of changing jobs (due among other things to full employment and modern transport), have presented it to us in an acute form in these days. The coal shortage is merely one symptom of the problem.

Sir George Schuster's reference to agriculture is incidental only, but it may cause surprise in some quarters. He asserts (page 77) that " morale and attitudes to work are better in manufacturing industry than among agricultural workers ". This judgment is not made as a criticism of agriculture, but

in confirmation of the author's belief that the difficulties many feel in their attitude to work are not primarily due to large-scale industry or to mechanized production. He views these great developments with a qualified optimism. Individual selfishness and stupidity bear their fruit in factory life as in any other human activity. There are social and institutional defects which need attention. But, in his judgment, there is nothing inherently evil in large scale mechanized production. Sir George Schuster, in fact, endorses the views which Michael Roberts has expressed in an earlier book when he refers to " the absurdity of the claim that the mere handling of machinery produces selfishness and irresponsibility " and when he makes favourable comparison between the moral and cultural life of a *settled* industrial community as against a normal society of peasants, serfs or " fellahin ".[1]

There are many other things worthy of attention in the mid-chapters of the book ; if I pass them over without comment, it is for lack of space and not for lack of appreciation. It is, however, difficult to avoid the feeling that this part of the book is almost identical with many other good text-books on industrial welfare and industrial relations. Has Sir George Schuster anything to say which is distinctive and which is integrally related to his Christian insights ?

The opening section of the book should give the answer and it has the merit of simplicity. It avoids the elusive vagueness with which so many writers veil this subject. Sir George Schuster bases his approach squarely on Greek philosophy. He makes the test of the good life to be as defined by Aristotle " activity according to a standard of excellence ". In this way he sees " the functional efficiency of a manager " as " an end in itself " (page 36). He recognizes that Plato and Aristotle applied their standards of excellence solely to " the life of reason lived by poets, philosophers and men of science " ; they excluded any

[1] *The Recovery of the West*, p. 289.

possibility that manual work could be tested by this criterion. Sir George Schuster maintains that this criterion can and should be extended to cover the great run of ordinary occupations. He then attempts to reach a Christian basis by adding certain Christian insights to this fundamentally Greek starting point. He takes the commandment to love one's neighbour as the distinctively Christian thing and expresses it in what he calls " the St. Francis attitude "—that is " the attitude of interest in each individual as a personality, expressed in sympathy and understanding ". He sees the Christian attitude to industry as one which views each person " as an end " in contrast with seeing people merely as means of production.

This attempt to marry Greek and Christian thinking results in a double series of " ends " : (1) the people involved in industry, and (2) efficiency or excellence of performance. These two series of " ends " are not clearly related. When the author refers to excellence, he never asks " excellence for what ? " ; he seems to assume, either that excellence is self-authenticating, or that it derives its human value solely from the satisfaction that it gives to the performer. That may be true of some kinds of activity (" Art for Art's sake " !) ; it is more than doubtful whether it can or should be applied to the great bulk of human activities.

The results of this starting-point are apparent in many ways throughout the book. There is a queer evasiveness about the central purpose of all economic activity. At one point, " the desperate need to increase production " is referred to almost apologetically, as though this were a peculiar and wholly regrettable feature of present day life—in a happier age, apparently, industry need hardly bother about production at all ! The author admits that " Nobody can be happy unless he feels that he is doing useful work " ; yet in the subsequent discussion, the emphasis is all on the activity of the worker and not on the usefulness of what he does. Even more striking is the fact that, right through the book, there is hardly any mention of the consumer—a fact

which is especially surprising when we remember that Sir George Schuster was for a time director of an important series of chain-stores !

A more subtle, but equally important, result of this starting point is that a true concern about human beings as " ends in themselves " easily slips into regarding human relationships as ends in themselves. It is no caricature, I think, to say that Sir George Schuster portrays the ideal factory as a place in which craftsmanship is practised for its own sake and good human relationships are achieved ! There is little explicit recognition that factories exist in order to make things. Sir George Schuster's justifiable fear of regarding human beings as " mere means of production " seems to have resulted in his forgetting that the human relationships in a factory or commercial undertaking are, and are *quite rightly*, means to an end. People are associated in industry in order to do the job, not in order to meet each other ; or, to put it in another way, a factory is not a social club. That does not prevent the human relations which spring up as a by-product of industrial work being good and wholesome. Indeed, it seems to be a law of life that good human relationships, like happiness, are best achieved as a by-product of something else, rather than when they are pursued as ends in themselves.

This concern with human relationships rather than with human beings is one reason for the consumer vanishing from the picture. In a normal factory, the consumer is a remote figure. It is easy therefore to set the " impersonal " demands of productive efficiency over against the " human " rights of the workers. Yet such a picture is false and one-sided. The manager, as Sir George Schuster insists, needs to see beyond his " labour force " to Tom, Dick and Harry at the bench. But his imagination should not stop there. He must also penetrate beyond " the demands of the market " to the hundreds of Toms, Dicks and Harries whose lives depend on things which his factory is making. The needs of consumers are just as much human needs as the needs of workers ;

the command " to love our neighbours " relates to them as well. The essence of industrial management is to correlate these differing, and sometimes conflicting, human interests.

Admittedly technical excellence and good human relations inside the works are useful pragmatic and rule-of-thumb objectives. Hence the central part of the book contains much practical good sense. If however, we are to penetrate below the surface, and to see industrial life whole, we must be prepared to look further. The failure to do this gives a one-sided picture even of what goes on inside the factory walls. It is here that the Greek assessment of work, based as it is on a tiny minority of artistic activities, is a poor and inadequate guide. On the other hand, we have in our Hebrew-Christian tradition an attitude to work which may be less intellectually articulate, but is more consistent and firmly based.

Dr. J. H. Oldham has pointed out the fundamental difference between these two attitudes to work in these words—" The attitude of classical culture to work had three distinguishing characteristics. It was aristocratic, artistic and athletic, or combatant. The educated Greek or Roman thought of ordinary routine work as degrading and unfit for a free man. The only kind of working he respected was the artist's activity, which he thought of as something masterful, imposing form and harmony, measure and reason on matter, which in itself is formless and disorderly. . . . Christianity brought a fundamental change. In early Christianity, what happens to us was felt to be more important than what we do. Work as a cultural achievement was no longer the main concern. It was thought of primarily as a means of service to the community. The Christian virtues of humility, patience, and the love which endures all things take the place of the will to power. . . ." There is here a fundamental cleavage of outlook so deep that it cannot be covered by any superficial synthesis. On the classical view, the value of any activity lies in its " creative character " ; on the Hebrew-Christian view, on its usefulness in meeting human needs.

It is worth while looking at this Hebrew-Christian understanding of work more closely, for it is so practical and common sense that it is readily overlooked. In the Old Testament, work is primarily seen as a law, as a necessary condition of man's life on earth. It was quite natural to find the rulers, teachers, and great men of the Jewish people associated with ordinary manual occupations—David working in the fields or Gideon helping with the harvest. Craftsmanship and excellence of performance have a place in Jewish thinking, but they are subordinate to the main purposes of the job, which is to meet human needs. The craftsmen in Ecclesiasticus are given a high place, but primarily because "without them a city cannot be inhabited". In the New Testament, work is seen not simply as a necessity but also as a means of service to our fellows. The supreme example of this (which is clearly of far wider application) is the story of our Lord washing the disciples' feet. The value of the act lies not in the technical excellence of its performance, but in the fact that it was an act of service. Von Hügel's comment on this story brings out in another way the contrast between Greek and Christian thought at this point. "The greatness of Christianity consists, as much as in anything else, in that it is without fastidiousness. . . . The heathen philosophies, one and all, failed to get beyond fastidiousness; only Christianity—a deeply costingly realized Christianity—got beyond it." [1] The Pauline teaching (e.g. in Thessalonians) follows this same line. Work is to be seen, not as the opportunity for excellence of performance, but as the demand of plain honesty. If a man eats and takes from the common store then it is a simple duty to make his contribution to that store.

I may seem to have laboured this point, yet it is of fundamental importance. Sir George Schuster has, quite rightly, pointed out the danger that our education, with its literary basis, may result in a devaluing of manual work. There is

[1] *Collected Letters*, p. 258.

little doubt that a great deal of religious writing and speaking about work has had a similar effect. It has often been based on Greek attitudes, and has thus given value to work only in so far as it has an obvious artistic or craft content. Our Christian thinking needs to get back to its own foundations and to see work, unromantically, with its character of necessity and mutual service. Craftsmanship and excellence of performance then have a true and worthy but subordinate place in the whole. This biblical approach does not leave the ends of " excellence of performance " and " human beings " hanging loose ; it brings them into a simple and integral relationship.

In the last three chapters of the book Sir George Schuster makes some comments on the political situation and enters on the familiar arguments about capitalism and nationalization. He points out, rightly, that many of the problems of human relations within industry emerge as keenly, although perhaps in different forms, in nationalized and in private industry. He fails to come to grips, however, with the issue raised in George Goyder's recent book *The Future of Private Enterprise*. Organized industrial production is a structure of social power. There are different groups of people which are differently related to the activities of a trading concern —shareholders, workers, management, consumers and the local community. The central institutional problem of industry is that of keeping power responsible to the various groups involved. The private capitalism of the joint stock company made power constitutionally responsible to one group alone—to the shareholders. In fact, the play of competition often led to this arrangement working out reasonably satisfactorily. George Goyder brings the assumptions of the Companies Act, as a universal pattern for industry, under keen moral criticism and also indicates that it can be a potent cause of irresponsibility. Nationalization alters the group to which power is responsible but, in some instances, leads to a very much larger unit so that the control of power becomes more difficult. It will be seen

that this problem is closely related to the one we were discussing above of the different human interests and the different groups related to an industrial unit—workers, consumers, shareholders, and so on.

To sum up, the weakness of this book is that it handles the human relations *within* the industrial unit too much in isolation. It neglects the total human setting of industrial activity, with its relations to other human beings outside the factory walls. This weakness springs in my opinion in a large measure from the inadequacies of Greek thought on this subject. It is a pity that Sir George Schuster, with his very wide and rich experience of different types of industrial and commercial enterprise, was not able to relate this experience to the more directly Biblical insights which are part of our Christian tradition.

W. G. SYMONS.

THE HUMAN FACTOR IN LARGE SCALE INDUSTRY

THERE is a very widespread feeling that something we call large scale industry is " doing something it oughtn't " to the individual. And among Christians who are once more getting used to the idea that there is a vital connection between a man's work and his religion there is a growing demand that the Church should do something about it. May I suggest that if we as Christians are to make a useful contribution to the discussion which is already proceeding we should be careful to keep two things in mind. First of all, that if recent technical and economic trends have really presented our generation with a new problem, the adage " a problem fully stated is a problem solved " applies. If we can be quite clear as to what large scale industry really is, and equally clear about the harm which it alone, as opposed to other forms of modern industry, is doing to the individual, then our Christian insight about man—an individual " made in God's image "—will immediately prompt us to do all that we ought to do. Secondly, although it would

be allowing Pride to rule us if we were to refuse to consider the various proposals for alleviation and reform which the secular world in its discomfort keeps asking us to approve and perhaps bless, we must nevertheless remember that history shows example after example of reforms which have righted one wrong by means which, as we could see afterwards, led logically to another.

Recent examples of high motive faultily directed, wiping out one evil only to produce another, have been concerned with the reduction of the profit motive. A man with high executive experience in the nationalization of industry, who had also been in a good position to estimate the evil effects on personal initiative and personal relationships of over-centralized management, lately suggested that some form of profit sharing, based upon performance in small area units, was necessary even in our nationalized industries if the present centralized control is to be humanized. And I think that is right. Unbridled lusting after private profit has undoubtedly brought many social evils in its train, and to remedy these evils high minded reformers often work for systems in which the profit motive has no place whatever. They forget that, as Archbishop Temple used to say, " God in his inscrutable wisdom planted the profit motive in the human breast. Man's job is to direct it aright." Whenever we fail to make adequate provision for the profit motive we find ourselves having to place an undue strain upon another excellent motive—that of service. And if we then persist in our course, our misdirected efforts, by failing to produce satisfactory results, will force us to fall back upon tighter and more centralized control, labour direction, and finally, as the Webbs admitted in theory and Hitler and the Russians in practice, upon penal labour camps for the recalcitrant. Fortunately, we in this country are likely to rediscover some of the virtues of the profit-motive long before this last stage is reached.

In the same way, if we ignore the very nature of Industry and set arbitrary limits to the size of industrial undertakings

merely because the evils we are at present concerned with show up more in big businesses than in small, we may yet find that our last state is worse than our first. For in spite of the fact that many industrial undertakings to-day are unnaturally distended and in consequence only amenable to controls which cannot take proper account of the individual person and his human needs, the truth is that much of our work does require to be organized on a much larger scale than ever before. A nation-wide transport system, an irrigation scheme for a large river basin area, the production of large quantities of sound every-day consumer goods, all these activities require large scale planning *before* we can establish the conditions which are necessary if we are to eliminate drudgery and improve the quality of worker-relationships, products and services. If we must not worship size then it is equally true that we must not be afraid of it where it is appropriate. Undoubtedly there is plenty of evidence that big business to-day imposes many inhuman tasks upon its servitors. But whilst recognizing this we ought to remember the drudgeries which big business has helped to abolish. Thomas Hood's " Song of a Shirt " was written about what we would now call a small home-industry, and even to-day many small businesses live on monotonous work which larger and more efficient concerns would not tolerate.

The trouble is that we have lost all idea of a norm, in this case (in Christian parlance) the vision of what God means the thing we call Industry to be. And yet all the observations of the secular scientists point to the fact that such a norm really does exist.

As I see it, the basic fact from which we must start is that the necessary work of the world requires co-operative effort. The poet co-operates with other poets in his tradition, the man on the conveyor-belt with his fellows up and down the line and in other industries ancillary to his. Any attempt to work in isolation damages the product and deprives life of its inherent fellowship. Precisely what shape

and size an association of men in co-operative labour effort ought to take depends entirely upon the objective they have in view. If maximum profit or maximum power is the objective, then of course the world is the optimum size which the organization must strive for. But for any objective intellectually and morally defensible, a size and shape not merely innocuous to the individual and his needs but actually helpful to them is the optimum. And we know how to discern the characteristics of the optimum for any job, provided we are really intent on doing so.

A housewife making a family meal, co-operates of course with her grocer, her butcher, the electricity company, and a host of other people as well, but as far as the actual preparation of the meal is concerned the optimum size for the job may well be that of one person. For a similar meal for 300 schoolchildren (and there is no reason why 300 schoolchildren should not dine together), the optimum size may be that of a team of six or seven people—by trial and error and comparing notes we can find out. And we can also find out by the same methods how the work should be divided amongst the team in order to get the best meal provided in the most economic manner and with the maximum encouragement of fellowship whilst the work is in progress. To take another example, Buckfastleigh Abbey was, I am told, rebuilt by six monks who took some twenty-five years over the job. Obviously one monk alone could not have done it in 150 years, for many of the operations must have required more than one pair of hands if they were to be done at all. So here you have what seems to be a freak optimum because, in a sense, time did not matter. On the other hand, the Festival Exhibition had to be completed by a certain date. And because of the urgency of the time factor a great many more men had to be employed on the site than would have been economically sound if time had not been of such consequence. Incidentally this overcrowding of workmen on a small site produced strains in discipline and fellowship which our normal customs were inadequate to deal with.

In recent years this question of optimum sizes for different kinds of production units is one which has increasingly occupied the attention of business experts, though too often purely economic considerations have been the only ones taken into account. And from another angle Welfare Workers and their associates have been working on similar lines, so that they are now able to tell us much about the way the social qualities of a working group are affected by its size and by the professional grading of the various members of the team which the process requires. Slowly but surely economic and social tests are being applied and their results used to destroy the idea that a business should always be trying to grow bigger and bigger.

But economic and social tests are not the only ones which ought to be applied to industry. There are aesthetic tests, for the instinct for beauty has also been implanted in the human breast. And religious tests! This is not, however, the place to discuss the work of bodies like the Institute of Industrial Design, or to develop the theme of " Laborare est Orare ". What I am concerned to emphasize is that for each industry or section of an industry, there is a *normal* size and shape which is appropriate to it and necessary for its health ; a *form* which is determined by the nature of the product and the inherent limitations of the process ; and that we must always bear this in mind when we talk about humanizing industrial conditions. The theologian would say that we must have a Christian doctrine of Industry to match with the Christian doctrine of man. Put bluntly, the implications of this statement are, that judged by even the production experts' standards, many, if not most, of our present industrial undertakings are *abnormal*—apart from anything else, they are either too large or too small, overgrown or stunted. In consequence, every effort to humanize industrial conditions is bound to raise, in each instance, the prior question of the size, shape and objective of the undertaking itself.

T. M. Heron.

SCAPEGOATS AND IDEALS

"WHAT do you Christians think you can do in industry?" asked a trade unionist in a mixed group of people discussing industrial problems. "Have you really considered what, as Christians, you have to gain by bettering the state of industry? I can't see that your faith was ever concerned with the objective of industry—raising the standard of living. It has always taught distrust of wealth, and found value in poverty; most of all it did so in the ages when it acquired the greatest social influence, long before there was any power-industry or any of our industrial problems."

The simple answer is that neither Christians nor their religion have anything to gain by the efforts some of them are making in this direction: they themselves happen to be engaged in industry and its affairs, or are keenly conscious of society's increasing dependence upon industry's well-being. Respect for individual poverty does not prevent them from seeking the material good of society. Their own performance within industry is admittedly as good as that of non-Christians, though they may be less confident that our industrial civilization is sure to raise the level of human well-being, because they believe that depends first and foremost on something else. If they start discussions of the kind mentioned it is because industry is in a demonstrably critical position. It is part of their profession in such a case to take counsel together, and with any others whose human destiny is involved with theirs.

Have they any special contribution, can they give a lead? Probably no more than anyone else concerned. The concrete problems of industrial life are nearly all matters of technique and organization; the solutions have to be acceptable to everyone concerned and commendable according to standards which are common ground. There is of course no more reason to expect specially good ideas of this kind from a Christian in industry than from a Buddhist or a dialectical materialist. He should, however, be of some help in getting the best practical propositions accepted.

One has never met anyone in industry who thought that easy. To secure agreement on any proposals for improving conditions and methods of work, it appears to be necessary to overcome much more than the ordinarily unreasonable amount of resistance provoked by anything unaccustomed. There are prejudices and suspicions rooted in different class outlooks, traditions and ideas which immediately come

into play, even though they are quite irrelevant. In a sense everyone has a religion, for he at least acts, feels and thinks *as if* a certain interpretation of life were the truth about it, and if he isn't clear about this, it may come up at inopportune times, like a mystical compulsion or tabu. There is an advantage here in knowing that one has a religion, in being able to refer to it and see what does or does not concern it; one is the less likely to get it entangled with neutral, practical affairs.

It can also help a good deal in such debates (to make a negative point first) to have some people present who are debarred by their principles from blaming what is wrong upon mental scapegoats—meaning by that the prevalent practice of ascribing social and economic evils wholesale to some single supposed origin such as the Profit Motive, or Capitalism, Communism or Materialism. Such generalizations, heavily charged with emotion, easily grow into substitutes for thinking, until one can hardly contemplate any event or proposition whatever without looking for the "hidden hand" of the hypothetical enemy. If there are Christians present who know their business, mental obstructions of this type tend to disintegrate, not because they are attacked; rather because they are brought out into the open and seriously estimated, but for no more than they are worth.

The Profit Motive, for instance, is a favourite scapegoat and, just because it is a *motive*, nearer than most of them to what Christians can recognize as the root of evil. As a motive for personal action, profit-seeking may be either the virtue of prudence or the vice of greed, and to fix the boundary between these is always an individual moral problem. The same problem can arise, though it is no longer purely personal, in the management of any public or nationalized enterprise, but there profitability is also something technical, an essential measuring rod for efficiency. A very little thought is enough to show that the Profit Motive, functioning as bugbear or scapegoat in an argument, is again something else—more like a hypothesis to account for the wickedness of the world, which might be saved if only it were done away. With this the Christian can partly and cordially agree, only adding that if that is what it is, profit is of many other kinds besides money-profit, which is probably the easiest to bring under social control: for ambition, power, even the getting of more love than one gives, are all objects for which people over-reach one another, and all have social as well as economic consequences. Like any other scapegoat, the profit-motive can be traced back to an irreducible something like original sin. One may not be able, in the course of a discussion on such concrete affairs, to go further and draw the con-

clusion—that this human condition, once genuinely and feelingly acknowledged, can alter our entire view of any human problem and of our own and others' responsibilities in it. But if any scapegoat pokes its horns into the debate, it can at least be properly identified.

But when the scapegoats are disposed of, if not before, there are all the utopian white hopes to be dealt with—the optimistic assumptions about things like free enterprise, world-socialism, national idealism, scientific salvation and the rest; for these things too can block our views of reality and impede intercourse between our minds. Analysis of these has to be positive and interpretative, a tracing of each ideal to its original and essential value, till we see what draws a man's belief to it—which is not any knowledge or calculation of its actual influence in the world: it is believed in because it contains a kind of good, embodies a treasured value. In each of these beliefs there is something belonging to a higher realm of discourse where all such values are inter-related and shine like stars together. From the earthy starting-point of our conference we may not get so far as to see this clearly together: if we did, we should see the points of absolute value in each human ideal vanish into the unapproachable light which, for simplicity and reverence, men call God: and that each individual heart, notwithstanding the root of evil in it, can respond with love to that radiance; that in the end it can love nothing else.

Such an analysis would be an interminable process. But if it be once faithfully begun, and mutual confidence established, something of the end shines into the beginning; an intimation that the end is glorious—not that it will be, but that it is. The structure of society and culture that we are so passionate to save and improve then no longer seems a thing of infinite and supreme importance. We are nearer seeing it as it is; subject to death as we are ourselves, and, even as we are, with the hope of resurrection if it be a good death. Our responsibility for our culture is an enormous paradox, for we can of ourselves do nothing to salvage it—except everything; nor does that mean giving ourselves wholly to it, but to the God who is finally responsible for the redemption of the world and all that is in it. At the same time, we know better than ever that we must labour as though everything depended upon us.

What we gain is a better light in which to see our work. To have elevated the ideals to heaven; to have sent the scapegoats where they belong—this is to have cleared the channels of communication between our minds, enabling us to co-operate better in the tasks of our daily life. P. M.

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